

302 Men as well as women derive great satisfaction from these strange ornaments.

304 The tattooing procedure is extremely painful.

It begins when the child reaches the age of eight. As might be expected, the child does not surrender of his own will to this agony; but he is taken by force, thrown upon the ground, and deprived of any motion.

[62] Then the painter traces the designs on the child's body with a sharp agouti tooth, [115] drawing blood.

[34] The indelible juice of the genipap is then applied to the incisions. These intentional wounds usually become inflamed, and fever sometimes ensues. For this reason, the operation is performed as a rule during the winter months, when the effects of the heat are less intense.

It is slow work: the first wounds are permitted to heal before the task proceeds. This renders the procedure so leisurely that the painting is only completed when the youth is nearing twenty.

304 It thus seems to be a sort of blood initiation -- a social
619 bond -- a consecrated tie -- which, like the individual ring in a chain, connects every member of the tribe to every other.

It is their most intimate bond and its origin, according to tradition, goes back to Caru-Sacaebê.

AVII

Time measurements -- Beliefs -- Burial customs.

[62] The Mundurucu call the sun casi.

65 They differentiate summer and winter, calling the former coatu and the latter iai.

They say that winter begins when the chestnuts begin to fall. And indeed the fruits of the chestnut (Bertholetia excelsa) begin to fall as soon as the rains come. [116]

764 This is the squatting position which was also used by the Quechua and the Egyptians. [The Mundurucu] bury with the deceased a few objects he had used in life, such as weapons, feather ornaments, etc. My interpreter was an intelligent Indian and spoke, besides his Mundurucu dialect, the Portuguese and Tupi tongues. He would translate without hesitation into Mundurucu the following sentences: "I miss my mother -- Nhebên uxi cahi" "I miss my son -- Nhebên opute cahi." The word nehbên means "to miss." "My soul goes to heaven -- Ubiumbê cabi cahi dhê."

765 This knowledge of the heavenly bodier, though still quite rudimentary; these beliefs in a future life, free from odious superstitions; this faculty to conceive and express abstract ideas and the purest and sweetest feelings of the human heart, such as nostalgia for mother or son -- all this surprised me on the part of a people that has always been considered one of the fiercest and most barbarous in the valley of the Amazon.

766 If the Mundurucu did not derive their beliefs and knowledge from some of the civilized groups on the Andean Plateau, I presume at least that for centuries they must have lived as the inhabitants of the plains villages do today -- that is, in centers as densely populated as [118] a savage economy based on hunting and the meager resources of a crude husbandry will permit. These villages are in constant communication with each other and preserve the same uses and customs. As I mentioned above, the Mundurucu tattooing pattern is really a blood initiation which stamps them with an indelible mark -- a sacred tie binding in brotherly communion all the members of this numerous and powerful tribe.

767 I will, however, abstain from drawing any conclusions whatever. My purpose is to observe facts with scrupulous care and to describe them with fidelity.

It may be that the light sketch I am tracing of the life of a savage tribe will be pondered by one of those superior minds who cogitate on human destiny and on the problems of mankind.

There is the task to plumb the mysteries of Providence, to search for the beginnings of man's journeys on this earth, for the paths he has followed and the destinies that await him.

MUNDURUCU MOIETIES

53

or kin, *baripaye*. The Ningü Mundurucu are also called by the Tapajós Mundurucu *Tywariricut*, "Tauarirana tribe or clan", as they make their loin, arm and ankle bands out of tauarirana lark. The linguistically related Wiañyen are called *i baurem*, "hidden"—hidden in the region of the headwaters of the Rio Mutum.

b. By what names are the Mundurucu known to other tribes? These names differ much. The Mundurucu are called among the Apicá, their friends, by the name of *Pari*, or *Itwá*, or *Madurukú*; among the Bacajiri, *Mandurukú*; among the Chipaya, *Karuriá*; among the Juruna, *Kaluriá*; among the Kurúya, *Karudiat* (compare Mundurucuan *Karu-ricut*, Red Arara sib); among the Matanawá, *Paici*; among the Múra, *Patisi*; among the To'gapi't, *Tcuruvi* (?); among the Pareci, *Saruma* (see *infra*); among the Torá, *Kaube*; among a more distant tribe, *Akékakuré*. Among the Dyurupéa, a "giant" Indian tribe, the Mundurucu are called *Tapeá'n*. The Dyurupéa say: "When we come, they cry *tapiá'u* and then flee". The reference is here to the tribe which the Apicá call *Urupéa*. The Dyurupéa must speak Apicá. In Apicá, *tapiá'u*, *tapiá'u*, means "Indian, stranger". Among the Wladawat, the Mundurucu are called *Tupáyt'u*, so the Mundurucu say.

c. How are the Mundurucu called by the "civilized" people? The most common designation is Mundurucu. Nothing certain is known about the origin or meaning of this name, so I shall not go into the matter here. They are also called *Caras Pretas*, "Black Faces", on account of the dark (not black) tattooing on their faces. Their third name is *Palkise*. The word comes from the *Lingua Geral*, a corrupted Tupi-dialect, and means "Father Knife", as the Mundurucu were known as head hunters, although not as cannibals.

In the State of Matto Grosso the Mundurucu were known as *Sarumá* (see *supra*). As Von den Steinen noted, they lived there next to the Apicá, and disturbed all the tribes of the Arinos and Ningü region by their attacks.

d. How do the Mundurucu call outsiders? Every non-Mundurucu, be he a "Brown-shirt" or be he some one with a pretension to a veneer of culture, is a *paricut*, a foreigner, to the "headhunters". But of course the Mundurucu living on the

¹[see *errata sheet*, Category 116, p. 514 - Analysis]

of a different origin. Since I have already given the essential material
 114 about the Apiacas it might, however, be appropriate to repeat here
 what I reported about the Mundrucus (Reise in Brasilien III. 1308 et.
 seq., 1337.) for no other traveller has actually observed these re-
 markable Indians in their native habitat.

The Mundrucus, Mondurucus, Mundurucus, Moturicus
 (called by the Apiacas Pari)

131 The Mundrucus are, together with the Apiacas, the ruling tribe
 in the northern basin of the Tapajoz. Their largest aldea de S. Manoel,
 which has trade connections with the Brazilians, lies about a day's
 journey below the junction of the Rio Arinos with the Juruena at the
 Rio negro (vermelho).

142 [387] When I met the first Mundrucus in the Mission Novo Monte
 Carmel de Canoma I had to admit that I had never before seen Indians
 like these. Without exception they were athletically built, broad-
 chested and four-square, plump and well nourished in limbs and torso,
 and the hard muscles so evenly covered as though these people had
 never interrupted a life of comfortable relaxation with the hardships
 [516] of war and the hunt. Their posture and their walk was that of conscious
 strength. What struck me the most, along with the general physical
 excellence of every member of the tribe, was the light skin color.

● 304 They were not so deep a copper red as many other Indians, in particu-
 lar those living on plains or on large rivers, and this paler color was
 considerably accented by the tattooing (it was not just painting) which
 covered almost the whole of the body. * Either the whole face was

*See the illustration in Spix and Martius
Reiseatlas. For this painful operation
 they use a comb made from the thorns of
 several varieties of palm trees. In all
 probability there is no other tribe in South
 America which practices tattooing to the
 same extent. Rob. Dudley has drawn similar
 ones from Guyana.

- 304 tattooed or there was in the middle of the face a semielliptical, blue-black spot from which numerous, parallel lines extended over the chin and lower jaw down to the breast. From the middle of one shoulder to the other, two or three lines half an inch apart run across the broad chest. Under these there are vertically placed diamonds, some filled in, some left in outline to the end of the chest. The rest of the torso is adorned similarly though not so completely and the same lines are repeated on the extremities with or without the diamonds. Variations are introduced according to individual taste. Among women the whole face is rarely blackened, they have only a malha, a crescent shape, the pointed horns of which are turned upward. Their [388] ears are pierced, [30] not in the lobe, but at the top in the first fold and they wear cane pegs [142] in the holes. The face of these people is wide, with a low forehead [302] shadowed by the hair which is cut straight across, the facial features marked, coarse and expressive of good nature. The eyes are always dark and not so slanted as the eyes of Indians of the more southerly tribes. The nose is large, often somewhat curved, not so short and blunt, with flaring nostrils, like those we have noticed among the Indians of eastern Brazil. Their heads are covered with thick, shining black hair which turns gray among the Mundrucus only late and then only in individual cases. I have never seen among them, any more than among any other Indians, an old man who was white-headed. In the 251 wilds they are unclothed except that the men wear a jock strap [Suspensorium] of cotton or a tacanhaoba. The women I saw were wholly naked, even in the mission, and to get an apron on them for 295 church was a matter of some difficulty. The Mundrucus and their neighbors, the Maues, with whom they are friendly, are, like the Apiacas, skilled in the art of spinning cotton thread and weaving hammocks which they hang outside their huts on hot nights. To catch fish [226] they usually poison the water in which the fish are found.* They make

They do this in ponds or dammed up brooks by stirring the crushed twigs and leaves of the timbo (Paullinia pinnata) into the water until it turns dark and foams. The fish, and even crocodiles, come to the surface belly up, stupefied or dead and the fish are eaten. The water is extremely poisonous.

Within the house each family has its own partitioned quarters and a fireplace or stone manioc oven (Tocantins, 1877). How many families usually occupy a single house has not been reported.

342

CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

The only item of *Mundurucu* clothing mentioned in the literature is the three-cornered penis cover suspended from a cotton cord, but there are several descriptions of the ceremonial feather garments for which this tribe is famous. Many authors consider the *Mundurucu* to have been the most expert featherworkers in South America within the historic period.

291

Featherwork.—Featherwork includes aprons, capes (attached to head-dresses), caps, diadems, belts, girdles, bandoliers, arm bands, and leg bands. The feathers used in this craft were at least in part obtained from birds kept in captivity; red, blue, green, and yellow feathers were carefully sorted by color and size and stored in baskets or in palm-stem cylinders. Martius was told that the *Mundurucu* were able to cause their parrots to grow yellow plumes by plucking their feathers and rubbing frogs' blood into the wounds.³ The feathers are attached to a net fabric. Tail feathers, arranged in parallel rows, are used in capes and pendants; rosettes of small feathers, bound at the quills, are attached to the base net to cover the attachments of long feathers; imbricated breast feathers may be used to cover the surface of a fabric or to sheathe a cord. Decorative effects are produced by simple alternation of colors.

287

[225]

A characteristic feathered staff is described as a stem of cane or wood about 3 feet (1 m.) long and 2 or 3 inches in diameter. The shaft is either covered with long feathers laid flat against it or sheathed with fine breast feathers. At the upper end a dense band of rosettes forms a projecting collar; a free cluster of long plumes may project from the head of the staff. The feathers are attached with wax and cotton thread. These objects are highly valued and when not in use are carefully stored in cylindrical containers. Their significance has not been reported; Martius merely says that when he approached a *Mundurucu* village, staff-bearers came to meet him.

293

Tattooing and painting.—The *Mundurucu* tattooing designs consist of fine, widely-spaced parallel lines applied vertically on limbs and torso; bands of lozenges across the upper part of the chest; occasional parallel horizontal lines, and cross-hatchings. Around each eye is tattooed a single-line ellipse; curved lines are drawn around the mouth. Lines converging toward the ears across the cheeks give the appearance of wings spread across the face. (For illustrations of *Mundurucu* tattooing, see the sketches by Hercules Florence (Steinen, 1899).)

304●

³ Nordenskiöld (1924 b, p. 207) says of this custom, which has been reported from other South American tribes, that the color change actually occurs, but zoologists attribute the change to dietary factors.

304 Hartt and Martius both mention tattooing combs of palm thorns, but Tocantins states that the operation is performed with an agouti tooth. The skin is slashed and genipa juice is rubbed into the wound. Genipa is also [302] used as a paint to color areas enclosed by tattooed lines. Both sexes are tattooed but there are slight differences in design for each. The operation begins when the subject is about 8 years old and proceeds gradually over a period of years. It is seldom completed before the subject has reached the age of 20.

302 **Hairdress.**—The aboriginal hair style was the same for both sexes. The hair was cut just above the ears and at the nape of the neck. The crown of the head was shaved but a short, circular tuft was left above the center of the forehead.

MANUFACTURES

283 **Baskets, ropes, and netting.**—Baskets are woven of creepers, straw, and twigs. Ropes and cords are made of plant fibers and cotton thread. 285 Women beat the raw cotton with sticks to separate the fibers and twist the thread with the aid of some sort of spindle. Cotton thread is used in [286] knitting net fabrics for featherwork, and in making hammocks. Fibers from the outer surface of muriti palm leaves are sometimes used in making hammocks.

323 **Ceramics.**—Pottery vessels, made by women, are modeled directly from a mass of clay and are said to be of poor quality.

411 **Weapons.**—The following weapons have been mentioned but not described: Bows, arrows of reed and of wood, poisoned war arrows, unpoisoned hunting arrows (Martius, 1867), spears with bamboo blades, javelins, wooden knives, hafted (stone?) axes, and war clubs. A cotton bandage was wrapped around the knuckles of the bow hand to protect it from the bowstring. Katzer (1901) has published illustrations of a number of flat, polished stone ax heads, of oval or nearly quadrangular shape, with lateral notches; these were found archeologically in Mundurucu territory. [172] [324] He reports that the Mundurucu still make such stone objects, but keep them merely as valuables or as children's toys.

TRADE

439 Despite hostility between the Mundurucu and their neighbors, they traded their featherwork extensively. They are said to have depended on an unidentified northern source for arrow poison. After the advent of the missions, manioc meal, sarsaparilla, and other forest products were exported to Santarém in considerable quantities (Martius, 1867).

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

614 According to Kruse (1934), the Tapajóz River Mundurucu have a patrilineal sib and moiety system. There are 34 sibs whose members are 616

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5

tribe in general and the extended family in particular. Also, although the men's houses are still built according to the traditional pattern, the dwellings are now built on a rectangular floor plan in contrast to the older elliptical shape. [78] [62] [341]

Modification of the traditional Mundurucú village is even more striking on the shores of the Cururú River. Some villages number almost 100 inhabitants, but others are tiny hamlets of two small houses; none has the men's house. All dwellings face toward the river, but there is no over-all village plan. The houses are constructed of wattle and daub and, but for a few distinctively Mundurucú characteristics, are much like those of the Neo-Brazilian population. This conformity to the architecture of the whites² is even greater on the Tapajós River, where the Mundurucú live in single-family isolation.

The decline of Mundurucú culture is also evident in the physical appearance and dress of the people. All now wear the cheap cotton shirts and trousers or Mother Hubbard dresses sold to them by the traders. The more traditional men of the savannah villages generally wear penis sheath and bark belt beneath this raiment and usually hunt in the latter accoutrements only. The elaborate body and facial tattooing that were formerly the hallmark of all Mundurucú, both male and female, is also on the wane. It is common now to see young people who are half-tattooed, or who have only the first few lines, never completed because of the lapse of the practice. [29] [178] [304]

HISTORY

The current decadence of Mundurucú culture is not unexpected. On the contrary, it is remarkable that the Mundurucú have preserved so much, and that they still have a semiautonomous society after more than a century and a half of continuous peaceful relations with the whites. They arrived late on the Amazon historical scene, and were not noted in published reports until 1768.³ Whether the Mundurucú reported at that time were the members of a war party or had migrated from their home territory is uncertain, for they were seen far to the north of the upper Tapajós country on the Maué-Assú River, a tributary of a channel of the Madeira River named the Paraná Mirim. But their center of strength remained roughly in their present habitat, and they fought a colonial military detachment in that region in 1795.⁴ Their defeat at the hands of government troops ended more than two decades of Mundurucú raids upon the Portuguese settlements of the Amazon and ushered in a period of peaceful relations and active alliance with the whites. [175]

Subsequent to their pacification, large numbers of Mundurucú drifted into the vicinity of the growing towns and missions on the lower Madeira and Tapajós rivers. The missions are of especial interest to the subject matter of this study. In 1803 the mission of Santa Cruz was established on the lower Tapajós River. [175] [179]

² The term "white" as applied herein to the Neo-Brazilian population of the Amazon is used as a shorthand way of saying, "people bearing a local variant of Luso-Brazilian culture, and who identify themselves with Brazilian society." Actually, the local people represent varying degrees of Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid admixture.

³ Monteiro Noronha, 1862.

⁴ Almeida Serra, 1869, pp. 4-5.

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dancers clothed in cloaks of buriti leaf, who danced from house to house, playing 796
in each. Another connected trait reflected intermoiety ritual antagonism. When 881
hunters of the White moiety killed a red deer, they mocked the Red moiety by 852
piercing the animal's lip and inserting a woman's lip plug. The ears were also [304]
pierced and plugs inserted, and the deer was carried triumphantly to the men's [616]
house where the hunters danced before cooking the meat.

Tattooing was the only life cycle observance practiced in recent years by the 304
Mundurucú. Although now rapidly disappearing, tattooing was started at the age 796
of about six or seven and terminated some ten years later. Complete tattooing 884
signalized full manhood for the boys and womanhood for the females and con-
stituted initiation as an adult member of the society. If the chronology reported
by my informant is correct, the *Duparip* may well have functioned partly to in-
corporate the young boys into the male world before they were subjected to the
long and painful process of tattooing. Their new status as novitiate males would
thus be signified by the custom of pecking the women at the end of the ceremony,
the first time in which they played a symbolically male role in interaction with
the women as a group.

WARFARE CEREMONIES

Summer, the dry season, was traditionally the time for warfare among the Mundu- 796
rucú. War parties usually stayed in the field throughout the dry season and re- 727
turned before the winter rains made rivers impassable and life uncomfortable.
Occasionally an expedition pursued its activities throughout the rainy season and
the following dry season, but it always returned before the rains forced it to spend
a second winter abroad.

Those Mundurucú who stayed at home generally passed at least part of the dry
season away from their villages, moving to the river banks where they fished and
hunted. The first rains of September and October brought them back to their
villages where they reunited with the returning warriors to take up the threads
of mundane village life and, also, to stage the most important rituals of the Mun-
durucú ceremonial cycle.

The villages of successful head-hunters were the locales of a series of ceremonies
that involved ritual observances during three successive rainy seasons after the
return of the war party.^a No ceremonies were held before going on the warpath,
and the war ceremonies of the Mundurucú were part of the religious beliefs and
activities surrounding the supernatural potency of the trophy head and of its
owner rather than rituals to assure a successful raid.

The return of a war party was an occasion of joy and festivity in the Mundu- 766
rucú villages, but the holiday atmosphere was often dampened by the saddening 727
news of the death of a kinsman during a foray or while on the march. The bodies 616
of the fallen warriors could not conveniently be brought back to their communi-
ties, but it was nevertheless considered necessary that certain clans of the comple-

^a Some informants claimed that the ceremonial cycle was carried out during one rainy season,
but the majority opinion and most reliable view were as above.

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a. Young Mundurucu man. Note tattooed vertical lines on neck and continuing use of ear plugs and arm bands. The houses of Cabruá are in the background.

[343]



b. Mundurucu women gathered in the communal shed in which *farinha* is made.

[end plate 2]

THE SETTING

174 try of the Tapajós River. To the north, the terrain is covered by dense rain forest, but south of the Mundurucú country are great stretches of savannah that continue into the Planalto de Mato Grosso. Their distinct preference for unforested village locales could only have been acquired in their present home or further south. The previously mentioned cultural characteristics suggest the latter, although I can at present offer no further corroboration of this possibility.

131 Although the Mundurucú regard their traditional homeland as the area of mixed gallery forest and savannah between the Cururú and Tropas rivers, only about 360 of the 1,250 surviving Indians live there. Another 700 live along the banks of the Cururú itself, and approximately 200 on the Tapajós River and tributary streams. The person in search of the exotic would be sorely disappointed at his 177 [290] first contact with the Mundurucú. They dress in Western [301] style garments, albeit ill-fitting and ragged, and they adorn themselves with glass beads, brilliantine, plastic combs, and religious medallions. The five-gallon gasoline can is [415] a far more important artifact than the clay pot, and they cook in aluminum pans. Since the Indian strain is so strong in the genetic make-up of the north Brazilian, the Mundurucú do not stand out sharply from their neighbors in physical characteristics. This is especially true of the 142 [304] younger Mundurucú who are no longer tattooed from head to foot as their parents were.

The way of life of the Mundurucú residents of the 171 Tapajós shore is especially close to that of their Brazilian neighbors. That the fundamental methods of farming and fishing are similar among both populations is not surprising, as north Brazilian subsistence techniques are largely Indian-derived. But beyond that, the Tapajós-River Mundurucú live in single-house isolation and not in villages 361

SOLIDARITY AND FISSION

THE TRIBE

Membership in the tribe was a social rather than a genetic matter. Children captured in war were fully incorporated into the society and are said to have remained loyal even in wars against the villages where they were born. The unity of the group was symbolized by absolute linguistic and cultural homogeneity, and the identity of its members was manifest in the possession of a clan name and the elaborate facial and body tatooing that until recent years was the hallmark of all Mundurucú. 619
[727]
[304]

The villages had independent subsistence economies, but for an occasional timbó fishing trip in which two communities might coöperate. But a number of villages usually participated in war expeditions and the major ceremonies. These occasions provided the opportunity for scattered clansmen to reunite and for people of diverse residence to coöperate in valued activity. 621
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619

Warfare was of special importance in this regard, because it called for a high degree of organization and coöperation. When the initiative was taken by the men of one village to go on the warpath, the chief delegated a member of the *Muchacha anyen*, a society composed of particularly valiant and learned warriors, to visit other communities and extend invitations to take part in the hostilities. Only a part of the men of any one village accepted the invitations, and the rest remained behind to protect the women, children, and old people and to continue hunting and horticultural activities. Thus, intervillage coöperation allowed the Mundurucú to raise sizable war parties without imperiling the economies and defenses of the villages. 721
619
[701]
[575]

The structure of Mundurucú tribalism was given within the rules of descent and residence. The dispersal of pa-

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